

Message Text

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61

ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 975
INFO AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
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USDEL JEC PARIS

UNCLAS OTTAWA 1064

E. O. 116 52 : N/ A

TAGS: MARR, VS CA

SUBJECT: EXTAFF STATEMENT ON MAY 2 ICCS HELICOPTER SHOOTING INCIDENT

1. SUMMARY. EXTAFF STATEMENT RELEASED MAY 2 DESCRIBES SUBJECT INCIDENT AS " DEPLORABLE... AND IS FURTHER INDICATION OF THE DIFFICULTY, IF NOT THE IMPOSSIBILITY, OF THE COMMISSION BEING ABLE TO CARRY OUT ITS RESPONSIBILITIES..." STATEMENT INDICATES VIEW OF CANADIAN ICCS REPS THAT VIET CONG IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SHOOTING BUT ALSO NOTES VIEWS OF OTHER DELEGATIONS THAT FIRING MAY HAVE ORIGINATED FROM RVN TERRITORY. STATEMENT CONCLUDES THAT IF FIRING WAS FROM RVN SIDE " IT WOULD REPRESENT SERIOUS DETERIORATION IN THE EXISTING SITUATION" BUT IF FIRING WAS FROM COMMUNIST- CONTROLLED SIDE THEN " SITUATION IS EVEN MORE SERIOUS." IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS MAY 2 EXTAFF MIN SHARP SAID " SITUATION IS NOW WORSE THAN IN MARCH" (WHEN GOC LAID DOWN ITS PRECONDITIONS FOR STAYING IN ICCS).

END SUMMARY

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2. TEXT OF EXTAFF STATEMENT OF MAY 2, 1973, FOLLOWS:

BEGIN TEXT. WE HAVE RECEIVED A REPORT FROM OUR DELEGATION IN SAIGON REGARDING THE LATEST INCIDENT OF SHOOTING AT ICCS HELICOPTERS WITHIN MINUTES OF THEIR DEPARTURE ON A CAREFULLY PRE- ARRANGED AND FULLY APPROVED FLIGHT INTO WHAT IS REGARDED AS VIET CONG CONTROLLED TERRITORY. THIS REPORT BROADLY CONFIRMS NEWS REPORTS OF THIS INCIDENT WHICH WERE AVAILABLE THIS MORNING BUT ALSO MAKES CLEAR THAT THE OCCUPANTS OF THE HELICOPTERS WERE AWARE OF BEING SHOT AT. MOST FORTUNATELY THERE WAS NO INJURY OR LOSS OF LIFE TO CANADIAN OR OTHER COMMISSION PERSONNEL INVOLVED. WE CONSIDER THIS A MOST SERIOUS AND DEPLORABLE INCIDENT AND IT IS A FURTHER INDICATION OF THE DIFFICULTY, IF NOT THE IMPOSSIBILITY, OF THE COMMISSION BEING ABLE TO CARRY OUT ITS RESPONSIBILITIES AS PROVIDED IN THE PROTOCOL UNLESS ALL PARTIES TO THE AGREEMENT ARE PREPARED TO ADHERE TO ITS PROVISIONS.

THE ORIGIN OF THE SHOOTING IS NOT YET CLEAR, BUT CANADIAN REPRESENTATIVES ON THE SPOT, WHO WITNESSED THE WHOLE INCIDENT, ARE OF THE VIEW THAT THE SHOOTING ORIGINATED FROM THE VIET CONG CONTROLLED TERRITORY ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE THACH HAN RIVER WHICH FORMS A BOUNDARY. HOWEVER, REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER DELEGATIONS PRESENT ARE APPARENTLY OF THE VIEW THAT THE FIRING MAY HAVE ORIGINATED ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE RIVER FROM TERRITORY CONTROLLED BY THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM.

OUR FIRST CONCERN IS FOR THE SECURITY AND SAFETY OF CANADIAN AND OTHER COMMISSION PERSONNEL AND FROM THIS POINT OF VIEW IT IS IMMATERIAL FROM WHICH SIDE THE FIRING CAME. DEATH OR INJURY WILL NOT BE MITIGATED BY THE ORIGIN OF THE BULLET. IF SUBSEQUENT INVESTIGATION CONFIRMS THAT FIRING DID COME FROM REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM CONTROLLED TERRITORY THIS WOULD BE THE FIRST TIME THAT ICCS HELICOPTERS HAD BEEN FIRED UPON FROM SUCH TERRITORY AND WOULD REPRESENT A SERIOUS DETERIORATION IN THE EXISTING SITUATION. IF, HOWEVER, THE INVESTIGATION CONFIRMS THAT THE FIRING ORIGINATED FROM THE COMMUNIST CONTROLLED SIDE OF THE RIVER, THEN THE SITUATION IS EVEN MORE SERIOUS BECAUSE THIS WOULD INDICATE THAT ADVANCE FLIGHT AND SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS CAREFULLY PREPARED WITH THE FULL APPROVAL AND AGREEMENT OF THE VIET CONG AUTHORITIES CANNOT BE RELIED UPON. END TEXT.

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EM IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS POSED AT TORONTO SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT MAY 2, PRESS REPORTS EXTAFF MIN SHARP SAID " IF CONDITIONS FOR THE TRUCE COMMISSION DO NOT IMPROVE IN 30 DAYS, CANADA WILL HAVE TO PULL OUT. ALL THE EVIDENCE IS THAT THE SITUATION IS WORSE, NOT BETTER THAN IT WAS THERE IN MARCH."

SCHMIDT

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